

Fire and Flood Menace Lower Fifth Avenue

Bursting Gas and Water
Mains Open Burning
Crater 100 Feet Long

2 Women Rescued
In Hotel Basement

Lower West Side Forced to
Use Candles and
Mineral Water

Lower Fifth Avenue boomed, shutters, glass and iron flames through yesterday evening, while for blocks around people went lightless and waterless because a forty-eight-inch main, for Croton water, could not contain the Catakill flood. Late in the evening flames still poured in ten-foot flickering jets from one end of a crater at Ninth Street, 100 feet in length and from 10 to 40 feet in width, and nearby a smaller flame shot from a manhole. Undetermined by gas mains had broken and the gas had caught fire.

Wagons of the Edison Company and the gas company clustered as closely as engines at a three-alarm fire. Employees of those concerns and of the department of Water Supply, Gas and Electricity and firemen dived steadily into the smoldering asphalt seeking a wheel where they might plug the gas pipe, but everywhere their pieces betrayed the fact that the pavement was a crust over an active volcano and all beneath were fire and a bellows of pipes from which the supporting earth had been washed away. At brief intervals detonations shook the pavement beneath their feet.

Candles and Lamps Used

For an hour or more after the water main burst, shortly before 2 o'clock, all of Manhattan south of the break suffered a water famine, and probably only the fact that Saturday afternoon of unusual boiler mishaps in office buildings. At 5 o'clock the Brevoort, the Berkeley and residences in the neighborhood were still using candles and mineral water. Greenwich Village and the West Side down to Eleventh Street were included in the prolonged drought.

It was at 1:15 p. m. that the trouble-making water main erupted. At first a slender but powerful column spouted through the pavement, increasing rapidly in volume as the Croton pipe quivered under the attack of the Catakill water. Only a few minutes elapsed

before a torrent was surging south on Fifth Avenue, swamping basements and cellars and uprooting the sidewalk flagstones.

According to their weekly habit, Kate Mulligan and Bridget Powers, laundresses, were discussing the affairs of the day over a sociable pot of tea in the basement of the sedate Berkeley apartment house, 1146 o'clock. At 1:15, Patrolman Patrick McGarren, already wading knee deep in the flood to summon help, heard appealing shrieks which emanated from the basement of the Berkeley, many feet below the street level, on the Ninth Street corner.

Policeman Rescues Women

From a source as mysterious as that of a prestidigitator's rabbits, the efficient McGarren materialized a ladder, which he let down gingerly into the water which almost filled the well of the arway between the hotel basement wall and the street. Then he descended to the window level and entered.

The two women were standing upon a shelf, with water above their aprons, at that, alternately screaming and praying. A half-empty teapot, bobbing to and down with a jaunty tilt in the water, told about them, was the only relic of the feast of five minutes before.

McGarren carried the women out, disarranging his overcoat and wading chest high in water to do so. When they were safe and drying in the upper regions of the hotel the patrolman discovered that his overcoat, with his shield pinned on it, had been washed away and was not to be recovered.

McGarren went home to change his clothes, and his place was taken by Patrolman Shanley. Some one who had seen the policeman running with a ladder sent in a superfluous fire alarm.

Employees of the Water Supply Department had closed the water gate and made connections around the break, which relieved the water famine in the lower part of Manhattan, the firemen had departed, and Patrolman Shanley stood on a convenient manhole at Ninth Street and Fifth Avenue, ushering trucks and limousines east and west with impartial hand and pondering on the freakish fate which had cast McGarren for the role of hero at the staidest point of Manhattan Island.

Shot Into the Air

Suddenly the manhole and its human burden were violently agitated. The higher shot a score of feet into the air, and the latter a lesser number, in proportion to its volume and weight. Alighting on all fours ten feet from his still soaring post, his face a study in disturbed meditation, Patrolman Shanley peered over his shoulder to find the cause of his flight. A column of fire roared ten feet above the spot where he had stood a second before.

The reserves from the Mercer Street police station, who had been sent home only an hour before, the firemen, who had answered the false alarm, the gas men, the electricity men and reinforcements from the Department of Water Supply, Gas and Electricity were called in a hurry. With the earth about half swept away by the flood, try of half a dozen gas mains had sagged and buckled, and somehow the gas had caught fire.

Explosion after explosion shook the neighborhood. Irregular apertures appeared here and there in Fifth Avenue's pavement with each detonation. The holes increased constantly in size and number, cracks zig-zagged across the asphalt, connecting with one another, and sections of the pavement began to drop into the depths below.

Again, as the flood had swept down to Eighth Street and west to Sixth Avenue, Eighth and Ninth streets and the intervening block on Fifth Avenue were closed to traffic. Candles winked in the houses nearby, but still the emergency crews strove in vain to plug the burst pipes. Longer and

wider grew the jagged rent in Fifth Avenue's pavement. The police were directed to keep everyone at least 100 feet from the edge of the crater, so sudden and extensive were the slumps. It was impossible to turn off the gas at the source of supply without running a risk of hundreds of backdrafts in as many homes, and it was nearly half past 9 before a diminution in the flame blasts showed that the workmen were gaining control. Then vents were chopped in the pavement north and south to permit the escape of the draft, and Fifth Avenue found time to count the casualties in flooded engine and truck rooms.

W. C. T. U. for War First

Delegates Decide to Make
Prohibition Secondary

WASHINGTON, Dec. 8.—"Win the war first, then prohibition," is the slogan women's Christian Temperance Union delegates carried when they left for the home state at the close of their annual convention.

Steps were taken to learn whether the American soldiers in France are being supplied with pure water, and eudogies will be made to prevent them from being given a wine or beer ration. The convention opposed sending of cigarettes and tobacco to the soldiers, but decided to make no protest to the War Department, because tobacco is not an official ration.

Intensive campaigns for prohibition in California, Florida, Ohio, Nevada and New York were determined upon in an effort to aid ratification of the Federal amendment when passed.

Means Gets Free Hand in Telling Story

Court Atmosphere Is Extremely Favorable While
He's on Stand

[Staff Correspondence]

CONCORD, N. C., Dec. 8.—Encouraged by the smiles of a sympathetic audience, the kindly mode of a juror or two and free judicial interpretation of "the rights of a defendant," Gaston, or "Bud," Means took the witness stand today in his trial for the murder of Mrs. Maude A. King and explained the whole matter.

Technically, "Bud" was under cross examination by John T. Dooling, Assistant District Attorney of New York, but actually he was accorded the floor whenever he desired to make a speech. Mr. Dooling's endeavors to stem the explanatory flow were received with as much grace as those of an alien heeler at an "old home week" gathering.

Blandly and deprecatingly "Bud" dis-

posed of every charge made by the prosecution. Never had he engaged in midnight dining parties with Mrs. King and won vast sums from her with loaded dice. The charge of the state that on one such party in a New York hotel 500,000 of his way from the coffers of the wealthy widow into the pockets of her "financial adviser" was denied with a ferocity which stirred the courtroom to high resentment. Never had "Buster" Foster shot craps with him, continued "Bud." There had been no craps games. The most he had done was "roll the dice" for a few minutes' relaxation. Mrs. King and Mrs. Maude Melvin, her sister, might have been present, but they had never lost "thousands." The most he ever had won at dice was \$2, declared Means.

Although he admitted that a complete detective outfit put in evidence by Mr. Dooling belonged to him and had been placed into a closet in his apartment in 1155 Park Avenue, New York, he denied the apparatus ever had been connected with Mrs. King's quarters on the same floor of the apartment house. He had no knowledge of the holes which deputies from District Attorney Swann's office found bored through the walls and doors of both his apartment and that of Mrs. King.

Dooling's Questions Foiled

"Gallard Smith, the inventor of the detectaphone, borrowed \$500 from me and gave me the whole outfit as security," Means declared.

"Did you not, as a matter of fact, buy that detectaphone?" began Dooling when Judge Cline, stepping from the bench, required him to desist.

"I've passed on that," he announced,

and the subject was closed, to the evident relief of the defendant.

Repeated attempts by Mr. Dooling to entangle the witness by adroitly directed questions, were almost always foiled by Means's battery of counsel, who, scenting danger, interposed objections which generally were sustained. Attempts to introduce more of the documents seized by the New York authorities in Means's flat met with determined opposition, which was generally successful. Mr. Dooling was barred from introducing correspondence between the dead woman and Carl L. Schurz, one of her lawyers.

"Is the State of North Carolina not allowed to use papers obtained from the attorney of Mrs. King?" asked Dooling.

"The State of North Carolina is not," answered E. I. Casler, of the defense, and the evidence was thrown out.

Means's story, directed, but uncontrolled, entirely by Mr. Dooling, began with an explanation of a \$11,000 note which he had given to William De Rossette, and which he paid soon after he had become Mrs. King's financial mentor. He, De Rossette and others, said Means, had gone into "the distributing business through the peddling trade."

The venture had failed, whereupon he assumed the "mercenary nominal" obligation to pay De Rossette his money back. He admitted that the first payment of \$2,500 on the note had been made by his check on the Illinois Trust and Savings Bank three days after he had opened the account with a \$25,000 deposit. This \$25,000, he said, had been lent to him by Mrs. King, and he had paid her 6 per cent interest and finally repaid the principal.

Concerning Mrs. King's financial condition early in 1915, when he began to

handle her affairs, Means was voluble and violent. She had borrowed every where she could, even \$7,000 from him. He gave it to her in the Manhattan Hotel in \$1,000 bills.

"Where did you get these \$1,000 bills?" asked Dooling.

"From a German named Heller for commercial secret service work," replied "Bud," who admitted that he didn't know Heller's first name or his present whereabouts. The mysterious German had an office at 11 Broadway, where Captain Earl Boy-Ed had quarters, but they were not connected. The best Means could say was that Heller was "about six feet two inches tall and quite handsome in his military bearing."

Mr. Dooling offered to help trace this \$7,000 through Mrs. King's bankbooks, but Means said the money never had been deposited by her, but sent to France to pay attorneys who had represented her in her marriage difficulties with Dr. Robert Perry Chance. Similarly Bud, on receiving the \$7,000 from Heller, did not bank it, but carried it around with him until he turned it over to Mrs. King. Mr. Dooling then brought out that, while Means was lending money to Mrs. King, he owed, besides the \$11,000 to De Rossette, \$15,000 to a Concord bank, and had numerous other debts.

These were settled, however, a few months later, after Mrs. Gaston B. Means had deposited twenty \$1,000 bills in the Lincoln Trust Company, of New York. This deposit also, Means was forced to admit, was made soon after a trust fund held by Mrs. King in the Woodruff Trust Company, of Joliet, Ill., had been dissolved and the bonds hypothecated. "Bud" smilingly admitted that he operated the Lincoln Trust ac-

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count by virtue of a power of attorney obtained from his wife.

What is regarded by the state as the most damaging admission yet made by Means is that Mrs. King always carried in her trunk the most valuable and important papers connected with her estate. This came out to-day when Means was asked concerning the present whereabouts of a \$35,000 note given by Mrs. Melvin to the dead woman.

"It was in Mrs. King's own files in her possession the last time I saw it," said Means. Means has testified that Mrs. King brought all her personal belongings with her to Concord when she came here to visit the Means household. The defence, it is expected, will ask that her papers be produced by the defendant.

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